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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 THE HAGUE 002047

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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/U.S.: PDAS VOLKER DISCUSSES BILATERAL
RELATIONS, NATO

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REF: A. A) THE HAGUE 2024

[1](#)B. B) THE HAGUE 2023

[1](#)C. C) THE HAGUE 1991

[1](#)D. D) THE HAGUE 1978

Classified By: Amb Roland Arnall; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During his September 12 visit to The Hague, EUR PDAS Volker discussed the road to Riga, detainee policy, Lebanon, ICTY compliance (septel), Guatemala's UNSC bid, contacts with Syria (ref b), OSCE reform and presidency, the Arms Trade Treaty concept, JSF, and energy security. He met with GONL officials, parliamentarians, and journalists, and delivered a speech to the influential Netherlands Atlantic Association. Volker defended U.S. detainee policy, saying that President Bush recognized the need to address negative perceptions and is working with Congress to reach a comprehensive legal solution. Following up on discussions held September 8 by visiting USNATO Permrep Nuland (ref c), Volker underlined the importance of two issues: resolving troop shortfalls in Afghanistan, and making progress on the global partnership initiative. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Volker held in-depth discussions with Dutch interagency representatives, including MFA Deputy Director General for Political Affairs Wim Geerts; MFA Director of Security Policy Robert de Groot; the Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Advisor, Karel van Oosterem; and MOD Deputy Director for Defense Policy, Jan Geert Siccama.

The road to Riga

13. (C) Geerts pressed for a unifying political message at Riga, and reiterated Dutch concern that explicitly stating NATO is a global organization would be divisive. He suggested emphasizing NATO's role "as an organization with the knowledge and capabilities for stabilization operations" worldwide. He feared that there was still not enough substance on the agenda for Riga, and thought that French obstructionism - which he termed worse than at any other time in recent memory - was largely to blame. He argued for including the EU and UN on the margins, an idea Volker discouraged. MOD's Siccama suggested that the NATO Response Force (NRF) be declared fully operational at Riga, even if not all the requirements had actually been met.

Georgia Intensified Dialogue and Enlargement

14. (C) France, Germany and the UK are all concerned about Georgian volatility, said Volker, and this is causing them to second-guess themselves on the Intensified Dialogue. But ID for Georgia would, he said, actually contribute to stability. The U.S. would prefer, Volker added, that the North Atlantic Council (NAC) meet prior to the September 21 Ministerial in New York, so that Ministers could openly discuss the decision afterward. De Groot said the Dutch could go either way.

15. (C) De Groot and Geerts repeated Dutch concerns that Ukrainian membership aspirations were moving in the wrong direction and that now was not the time to discuss expansion. Volker urged the Dutch to support at least mentioning the aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia. He recommended the summit document say that enlargement has historically been a success and that it set a date certain for Balkans decisions. He said we needed to hear from Ukraine how it wanted to proceed with NATO, and support them as far as they were prepared to go at this time.

Global Partnership

16. (C) NATO needs to develop its ability to work together with partners around the world, to deal with emerging crises, said Volker. We need one toolbox, he added, without firewalls. He acknowledged that Japan and Korea have shown only lukewarm interest in open-ended consultations, to which Geerts replied the Dutch are keen to try, with one or two other countries, to prepare an options paper. De Groot suggested the Germans might be useful in this, though it needed to be discrete and done outside the NATO conference rooms. Volker said he would be interested in helping shape any Dutch ideas on the subject discreetly in advance, and we should in any case see how the discussions go in New York, as this will be an issue we expect Ministers to discuss.
Afghanistan

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17. (C) The Dutch repeated their frustration with Karzai (ref c) and hoped we would press him while he was in Washington. The army and police needed to be adequately paid, and they needed uniforms and resources. Geerts said he had traveled with PM Balkenende in August to Afghanistan, and it was his distinct impression that Karzai says all the right things but delivers nothing. Karzai has no policy, no reconciliation program in the South, de Groot contributed, adding, "We can't win with this." Geerts suggested the need for increased consultation in Kabul among allied representatives, to bring more pressure on Karzai. He echoed the U.S. suggestion (ref c) that NATO senior civilian representative, Dutch Ambassador Daan Everts, take the lead. Volker floated a suggestion, that Afghan Coordinators from NATO allies might also get together prior to Riga.

18. (C) Geerts said that ISAF must make progress on the ground before the onset of winter. Volker noted that NATO must also

resolve the ISAF troop shortfall, prior to Riga. He expressed support for Dutch and UK efforts on that. If Afghanistan is in bad shape when leaders gather at Riga, it could overshadow the summit. But if we do our job well before Riga, Afghanistan would be one example among many of how NATO is fulfilling global responsibilities.

UNSC GRULAC race: Dutch still playing it close

¶9. (C) Volker urged the Dutch to support Guatemala's lobbying effort, particularly in Asia and Africa, where we think the race will be decided. He asked the Dutch to consider the credibility of the UN, particularly in the U.S. Congress, if Venezuela were to gain a seat. Chavez would use the UNSC, he said, to support the "Bolivarian Revolution" elsewhere in South America, to attack the U.S. and to make life easier for rogue states.

¶10. (C) Guatemala, by contrast, is democratic, has made tremendous human rights gains, and is a contributor to UN peacekeeping operations (including the DRC, where they lost eight troops). "We are not seeing strong views," coming from the EU, he added. Geerts responded, de rigour, "Venezuela is a neighboring country of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. We will act discreetly." In a separate meeting with MFA Director General for Political Affairs Pieter de Gooijer, Ambassador Arnall and Volker again raised the issue. De Gooijer quietly affirmed that he expected The Netherlands to support Guatemala.

Lebanon

¶11. (C) The GONL is still considering the possibility of sending a frigate, said Geerts, to operate with the Germans under NATO auspices. The cabinet will look into it, he said, but not if the Lebanese maintain their insistence on a 6 mile barrier. Geerts then turned to Lebanon reconstruction, expressing interest in the results of the joint U.S.-UK assessment mission. Volker expressed our concern that the money get to the right people, and put forward the idea of a trust fund, in case some allies wanted to contribute but did not have sufficient personnel to place on the ground. The Dutch, who had proposed a NATO clearinghouse possibility, expressed interest.

OSCE: Dutch support Kazakh bid

¶12. (C) Volker acknowledged continuing Russian efforts to constrain OSCE democracy promotion efforts, but said that we were hopeful of closing out the reform package. We are trying to shine the spotlight, he said, on frozen conflicts and increase attention to proper treatment of NGOs. He added that we absolutely will not consider raising our contribution when the budget is reviewed under the Spanish chairmanship.

¶13. (C) Volker said the Kazakhs were receiving mixed messages on their bid for Chairman in Office, including expressions of German support. Geerts said that FM Bot, too, had recently informed the Kazakhs that the GONL would support their bid. Volker replied that a Kazakh presidency now would not be credible, given Kazakhstan's recent election and lack of progress on democracy. An OSCE Chairman on Office needs to represent fulfillment of OSCE principles. We have told them that we would be willing to support them later, he said, provided their actions reflect OSCE principles on democracy. Volker said that to unravel this, we should support Greece
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for 2009, Lithuania for 2010 and consider Kazakhstan again for 2011.

Arms Trade Treaty

¶14. (C) Geerts said that The Netherlands supports giving a group of experts a mandate to explore the possibilities of

such a treaty. The Dutch are remaining quiet in their support, though, to avoid the perception that the treaty is a ""western"" idea. He hoped that the U.S. would not vote against the measure, at the UNGA.

Joint Strike Fighter

¶15. (C) Geerts and de Groot believed the prospects of a JSF MOU prior to the November 22 elections looked increasingly unlikely. Labor (PvdA), they said, is clearly coming out against JSF, and it is far from certain that sufficient votes exist to gain approval prior to Parliament's November 1 pre-election recess. Geerts added that the issue had become extremely sensitive. Volker urged the Dutch to make the case for JSF.

Energy security

¶16. (C) The Netherlands, said Geerts, wanted to avoid becoming overly dependent on Russian energy. They needed to secure alternate sources, he said, and at the same time have options to make life difficult for the Russians. Some EU countries would, he believed, allow energy concerns to affect their relations with Russia. He liked the language developed for the Energy Security Conference, scheduled for this spring but cancelled. He suggested we continue a dialogue on this.

Detainee issues: Dutch criticism remains heated

¶17. (C) MFA Director General for Political Affairs Pieter de Gooijer dedicated his entire 30 minute meeting with Volker to detainee issues. De Gooijer was focused exclusively on the delicate situation in which Foreign Minister Bot has found himself (refs a and d), and the need for us to be sensitive to this in our public statements and meetings with parliamentarians.

¶18. (C) Parliamentarians Bert Koenders and Hans van Baalen, foreign policy spokesmen for the Labor Party (PvdA) and the conservative Liberals (VVD), respectively, both focused largely on detainee issues. Koenders, a strong supporter of the transatlantic relationship, was one of the instigators of the parliamentary debate on secret prisons (ref a). As van Baalen explained, in a separate meeting, President Bush's speech September 6 provided the ideal opportunity for the left to attack the credibility of Bot and his governing Christian Democrats. Van Baalen, whose Liberals are junior coalition partners, added, though, that even within his own party, there was real concern that the U.S. was drifting away from shared transatlantic values. He said that he shared concern over lack of due process in secret prisons, but promised that Liberal criticism would remain well-reasoned as long as he was around.

¶19. (U) In talks with de Gooijer, Koenders, and van Baalen, as well as in remarks to the Netherlands Atlantic Association and interviews with journalists, Volker vigorously defended the President's decisions on removing all detainees from CIA detention facilities, guaranteeing ICRC access, and guaranteeing appropriate treatment under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, the Detainee Treatment Act and the newly issued Army Field Manual. Questions dealt almost exclusively with detainee issues and Dutch concern that U.S. detainee policy had strayed from a commitment to rule of law and due process. Volker emphasized repeatedly that this was not the case, and indeed that President Bush had taken steps to comprehensively address the legal issues, treatment issues, and underlying values issues that had been of concern to many Europeans. Volker explained that the President had now gone to Congress and was asking it to consider legislation that would provide a comprehensive legal solution to the problems encountered in the war on terror, consistent with the recent Supreme Court ruling.

¶20. (U) Despite Volker's repeated focus on the positive

decisions taken by the President, Dutch media chose to focus coverage of his visit on the fact that, while the detainees THE HAGUE 00002047 004 OF 004 had been removed from CIA detention, the CIA program itself remained in place. These stories, in turn, factored into Dutch parliamentary hearings on the subject on September 13, and prompted several prominent politicians (including FM Bot, Koenders, and van Baalen) to express deep disappointment with the U.S. position.

¶21. (U) PDAS Volker cleared on this cable.
ARNALL